UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
57th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 13 May 1997
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 57th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. STEIN (Germany)
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/51/SR.57
12 June 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

97-81338 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Sengwe (Zimbabwe), Mr. Stein (Germany), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 123: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING FORCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST (continued) (A/51/684/Add.1)

(a) UNITED NATIONS DISENGAGEMENT OBSERVER FORCE (continued) (A/51/405/Add.1-2)

(b) UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON (continued) (A/51/535/Add.1-2)

1. Mr. HOSANG (Director, Peacekeeping Financing Division) said that the amount of $200,000 in respect of hospital costs for three soldiers, mentioned in the Advisory Committee's report (A/51/684/Add.1, para. 38), was a rounded aggregate of an amount of $149,000 and an amount of $49,000.

2. The amount of $149,000 was the estimated cost of medical treatment and drugs relating to the incident at Qana on 18 April 1996, and was included in the total of $893,319 contained in annex III to the Secretary-General's report (A/51/531/Add.1). The amount of $49,000 was for first-line treatment, in respect of which $47,700 had been billed to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The Force Commander had been formally notified by the Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defence Forces that the Israeli Government would meet the cost of first-line treatment. Second and third-line treatment, which was continuing in respect of one of the soldiers, had to date cost some $3,600, and it was anticipated that UNIFIL would receive additional invoices.

3. Mr. COHEN (Israel) said that over the years United Nations reports had repeatedly held Israel responsible for events in southern Lebanon while ignoring the primary international responsibility of the Government of Lebanon to prevent terrorist groups acting within and from its territory. Israeli actions were in direct response to repeated terrorist provocations and violence. The Israeli action at Qana had been a response to attacks on Israel by Hizb Allah, which had left Israel with a military option only. Responsibility lay squarely with the terrorists and with the Lebanese Government, which encouraged their activities. Any damage inflicted on UNIFIL through military action conducted in self-defence was the direct consequence of terrorist aggression and Lebanese collusion. Israel should not be held responsible.

4. Mr. SULAIMAN (Syrian Arab Republic) said that it was not clear whether the amount of $131,750 utilized for immediate repairs to premises was included in the total direct costs of $893,319. He requested clarification. The Secretary-General's report stated that the decision to relocate the Fijian battalion had been taken for operational reasons, whereas the Advisory Committee's report stated that the relocation had been due to the incident. The associated cost of $880,300 should thus be included in the total costs attributable to the attack. Furthermore the total costs of $1,773,618 excluded the amount of $200,000 in hospital costs for the three soldiers, so that the cost of the Israeli attack was in fact $1,973,618, assuming that the amount for immediate repairs had already been included in the direct costs.

5. The reward for the service of innocent soldiers in the cause of peace had been a savage shelling by Israeli forces, with tragic results. It did not seem logical for the States Members of the United Nations to meet costs resulting from Israeli aggression against a United Nations headquarters. Indeed, Israel should be responsible for financing UNIFIL in the first place, since the Force was there only because of Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. Israel's shelling of the UNIFIL headquarters constituted State terrorism, and, Israel alone should defray the costs attributable to the attack. The Israeli attempt to blame Lebanon was totally unacceptable.

6. Mr. ATIYANTO (Indonesia) said that his delegation was willing to accept the proposal made at the previous meeting by the representative of Lebanon.

7. Mr. NAJEM (Lebanon) said that Israel had occupied southern Lebanon since 1978, having failed to respond to the call by the Security Council for it to withdraw. The violence in southern Lebanon was caused by the Israeli occupation, and under international law the people of Lebanon had a right to resist. The terrorism was the occupation, the killing of innocents and the shelling of Lebanese villages, as well as the deliberate and premeditated attack on Qana, in which 106 innocent people had lost their lives.

8. Mr. FATTAH (Egypt) said that the fact that Israel had assumed responsibility for part of the cost of treatment of military observers injured in the attack was tantamount to implicit recognition of its responsibility. What the Committee was really debating was outright aggression against a United Nations headquarters. The aggressor should assume full responsibility for all related costs; there was no justification for other countries to meet the costs of the damage. In fact such a course would establish a very serious and dangerous precedent, which might encourage other parties to commit similar acts of aggression against other peacekeeping forces elsewhere.

9. Mr. FARID (Saudi Arabia) said that his delegation fully supported the views expressed by the representative of Lebanon. As a matter of principle Israel, which had launched an attack on an international headquarters, should defray all the costs relating to the resulting damage and pay full compensation to the families of the victims. His delegation supported the proposal made by Lebanon on behalf of the Arab Group.

10. Ms. RODRÍGUEZ ABASCAL (Cuba) said that her delegation also supported the proposal made by Lebanon.

11. Mr. SULAIMAN (Syrian Arab Republic) requested the issuance of a document providing a breakdown of the amount of $200,000, and indicating whether it was partially included in the figure for total costs. The document should also indicate whether the amount for immediate repairs was already included in the figure for total costs.

12. Mr. HOSANG (Director, Peacekeeping Financing Division) said that an explanation of the amount of $131,750 for immediate repairs was provided in the Secretary-General's report (A/51/535/Add.1, annex II, para. 27).

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.